

Digest of A Performance Audit of USHE Operational Statistics

This audit was initiated to provide data on the number of higher education employees and the amount of work they perform. The Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) Employee Count Report reported 22,700 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees in fall 1998. The report, while improved over the first employee count in 1997, still has some inaccuracies, mainly in categorization of employees within the report.

Limited formal workload measurement is done in the USHE. More data are available on faculty workloads than on non-instructional workloads; Utah's professors carry similar workloads to those in other states. There are more non-instructional than instructional staff in the USHE, a pattern similar to staffing elsewhere. However, little information exists regarding workload measurement for the non-instructional employees.

The first chapter presents some background information on performance measurement and accountability in higher education. Interest in higher education accountability is high in Utah and across the nation.

- The present focus appears to be shifting from input and process measurement to outcome and performance measures such as graduation rates and professional certification pass rates.
- The Utah State Board of Regents (SBR) has identified four performance indicators that could be tied to funding. Also, 12 system-wide performance indicators (not tied to funding) have been proposed, as have 18 institution-level indicators.

Remaining chapters in the report deal with the following areas:

The USHE Employee Count Report Is Improving. The Utah System of Higher Education Employee Count Report (S-12) gives a fairly accurate summary of the number of employees, citing a system-wide total of 22,700 FTE employees for 1998. The report has undergone several changes in two years, improving the instructions and revising the format for greater clarity. However, improvements are still needed, particularly to increase the consistency of report preparation among institutions.

Recommendations:

1. We recommend that the SBR take further steps to ensure institutions are consistent in the use of instructions and slotting employees into job classes when compiling the USHE Employee Count Report.
2. We recommend that the SBR discuss the options of basing the Employee Count Report on point-in-time vs. year-end data with the Legislature so the Legislature can decide which data set best meets its needs.
3. We recommend that the University of Utah, along with the SBR, revisit the way “exact pay” employees are counted (or not) for report purposes once their new personnel data system is fully operational.

Faculty Workload Data Show More Instruction. Faculty workload data within the USHE reflect that professors and instructors are spending more time in instruction-related activities when compared to instructors at peer institutions and national averages. USHE faculty carry an equal or greater credit load compared to their peers and devote a higher percentage of time to instruction. In addition, most USHE institutions comply with the credit load policy implemented by the Board of Regents. The following points illustrate the USHE’s focus on instruction:

- Sampled USHE institutions’ faculty teach a higher credit load than selected peers and national category averages for like institutions.
- The SBR has implemented Policy 485 requiring professors to teach average minimum credit loads. Compliance with this policy needs some improvement: USHE’s four-year institutions meet the requirements, while three of the five two-year institutions taught less than the required credit load in 1997-98.
- USHE faculty’s overall workload percentages differ from national averages. Sampled institutions in the USHE dedicate a higher percentage of time to all instructional activities, while spending less time in research when compared to national data.

Recommendations:

1. We recommend that the Board of Regents continue to monitor compliance with Policy 485 on institutional teaching workload.
2. We recommend that the Legislature determine whether the SBR should continue to survey faculty for research and service activity data.
3. If the faculty activity survey is continued, we recommend that the Board of Regents and institutions decide whether to report faculty activity data in hours or percentages, and then to be consistent in using the method agreed upon.

Non-Instructional Staff Workload Measures Are Few.

Little workload measurement has been done on non-instructional employees in higher education. The lack of workload measures for non-instructional staff made it necessary for us to look at USHE staffing patterns (i.e., employees by type) compared to staffing in institutions elsewhere.

This chapter includes sections on the following:

- Staffing patterns in the USHE and other states show that higher education institutions typically have more non-instructional than instructional staff.
- Workload and staffing decisions hinge on managerial assessment of needs and availability of funds.

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